DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 084 PS 021 117

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TITLE Quality of Care: A National Sample.
PUB DATE [91]
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Caregivers; *Day Care Centers; Differences; *Educational Quality; Foreign Countries; *Infants; Local Legislation; National Surveys; Preschool Education; Program Evaluation; *Regional Characteristics; Standards; Statistical Surveys; *Toddlers
IDENTIFIERS *Italy

ABSTRACT

This survey of 25 day care centers in 5 regions of Italy was designed to determine the characteristics of competent centers and the effects of differing local regulations on the quality of care provided. The Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and a questionnaire were utilized to assess the quality of the day care centers in the study. It was found that day care centers in northern and central Italy were rated of higher quality than those in southern Italy and the islands (namely Sicily and Sardinia), mainly because regions in the north and center tended to have particularly efficient management and organized training courses for their staff. Significant qualitative differences between centers within a given region were also discovered. It is recommended that more attention be placed on both the professional and inservice training of child care providers to help improve the quality of day care centers. (MDM)

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Quality of care: a National Sample

There has been debate in Italy over the last 20 years on the subject of day care centres, in parallel with the various phases of application of the basic law passed in 1971. This has emphasized the particular value of the provision, a favourable laboratory for reflection on educative practice for the 0-3 years age range and also on the social image of infancy, the family and the staff of a centre like this, which is linked to the needs of a society in transformation. However in general there has been very little work in our country on the problem of optimal standards for day care centres and indeed there is a need for analytical tools and methods for the assessment of local situations, which lay bare the features and variables which show its quality.

On the basis of experience gained in running day care centres, new types of centre for the 0-3 years age range are being proposed in some Regions of Italy, in order to be more responsive to the demands of society. Such centres are more flexible than the existing public day care centre and are open to users who are not officially registered at a centre. However we are also at present facing the crisis of the welfare state and the cuts which the budget has made in public expenditure. Therefore there is a growing interest in the quality of existing centres, and an attempt to form a balance of the first 20 years of Italian day care centres. Thus it seemed to be useful to reflect on the parameters which guide a "good" day care centre: the qualitative profiles of the individual sections of a sample of 25 centres, situated in 5 Regions of Italy, were mapped out on the basis of an assessment scale, trying to focus on the underlying educational patterns, and their connections within the same centre.

## 1. Research procedures, methods and tools

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As was emphasized in the previous paper, the situation of provision for the 0-3 years age range in Italy is not immediately clear. The "official" sources - the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) and the Health Ministry - often provide discordant information, and furthermore each individual Region, in the light of the basic law (n°1044, 6 December 1971), has launched policies for early infancy that differ in both aims and their minimum operating standards.

The present investigation is a contribution to the understanding of a number of problems connected to the day care centre, which relate to different levels of analysis.

The research proceeded as follows:

1) A survey was carried out in collaboration with the

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Health Ministry on the national distribution of the centres; this survey investigated the distribution and use of the centres and the situation concerning staff, management and in-service training.

2) The pattern of legislation by each Region after the 1971 national law was examined. A number of invariable parameters were used - the aims of the centre, building norms, the staff, the care giver:child ratio, management and funding - constructing a scale for the quantitative assessment norms for day care centres. This operation was carried out in order to link the first level of research to the second, which is closer to the individual microsituation. In this way a classification was drawn up on the basis of which a number of Regions, with very different legislation regarding centres, were selected. In these sample Regions a detailed analysis of the profile of the centre was effected. The regions selected were Emilia Romagna (classified in first place) and Sardinia (bottom in the classification table), Veneto (the median), Umbria (classified between the median and the top of the table) and Campania (classified between the median and the bottom).

3) We further attempted a more detailed examination, developing a tool for the analysis of individual centres in a country like Italy where there exists great variability in the centres. Bearing in mind the lively debate on the problem of reconstructing the mechanisms that guide the ecology of an educational setting for early infancy, and consequently also the assessment of the minimum standards which assure its quality, we selected a tool designed by T. Harms, D. Cryer and R.M. Clifford (the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). This is a scale which seeks to assess the quality of settings like the day care centre, and which tries to identify, in the course of one or two visits to the educational centre, the fundamental characteristics of each section - the structure of the space and the timetabling and rhythm of work - and also the patterns of interaction between adults and children, the organization of the furniture and the materials, and the ability of the centre to respond to the needs of the staff and the clients. The validity of this Scale, which responds to the needs of different types of centre and of both researchers and care givers, has been tested. The ITERS has been translated into Italian. It tries to assess the variables that have a strong influence on the ecology of a centre for the 0-3 years age range. In order to use it to best advantage in Italy it was necessary to add two items to the subscale that deals with interaction. These concern the patterns and timing of the introduction of new children, which in our country are considered of fundamental importance not only for the child but also for the parents, who bring him to the centre, and for the care givers, who will have to deal with him and will have to cope with the problems to which separation from the family, albeit temporary, gives rise.

Furthermore we decided to accompany the scale with a

questionnaire concerning the management characteristics of the centre. The questionnaire was to be distributed to the care givers involved in the research, and aimed to provide a more complete picture of the organizational aspects and the administrative conditions which sometimes have a heavy influence on the shape of the centre.

## 2. Sample design

Since, as has been stated above, the policies for early infancy in Italy differ on a regional scale as regards the 9 parameters identified, it was considered that the choice of the 5 Regions significantly reflected these differences. Within these five Regions we selected a random sample of 25 day care centres. The sample selected was of 10 centres in Emilia Romagna, 4 in Umbria, 5 in Veneto, 3 in Campania and 3 in Sardinia. It should also be said that since the sample of day care centres investigated in the group of five regions was a stratified random sample and thus gives unbiased predictions, it was possible - on the basis of the mean score of the sections examined using the ITERS in each Region and of the standard deviations of the total scores - to determine the confidence interval within which the mean score of the population of the five Regions falls to 95% confidence level. This interval is small and it was thus possible to compare the group of five Regions.

Five people carried out the ITERS assessments - Egle Becchi, Anna Bondioli, Monica Ferrari, Paola Livraghi and Donatella Savio. After trying out the scale in three different sections of 2 day care centres in Pavia which were not in the sample, they took turns in visiting the sample centres; two people visited each centre selected for a day. I was present at all the assessments and since the study of the variations in scores assigned to each section by the different pairs of observers (variations between -2 and +2) showed percentage agreement was over 80%, further analysis of scores was limited to those assigned by the observer who was always present.

## 3. Some Results

The choice of the five sample Regions was based on an analysis through time of the pattern of legislation; it is thus useful to try to read the observations on the qualitative standards of the centres in the different Regions on the basis of a comparison between the "should be", in relation to the laws passed by the various Regions, and the concrete reality of the single microsituations examined (and only later on the basis of their grouping by Region). This comparison emphasizes the less happy situation of the centres in Campania and Sardinia, and highlights yet again the difference between the South (and Islands) and the Centre and North of Italy.

Indeed if Spearman rank correlation coefficients are

applied to the classification of five Regions constructed on the basis of the assessment of the legislative pattern (Table 1) (what the centre should be) and to the classification of the five Regions based on the scores assigned by the ITERS (Table 2) (the quality of the centre as actually measured) the r value is 0.8. Above all this result indicates that there has not been a complete overturning of the classification, even if Sardinia and Veneto have climbed one place in the table which reports the mean points assigned by the ITERS.

*Table 1. Regions classified according to the mean scores assigned on the basis of their Regional legislation.*

1. Emilia Romagna
2. Umbria
3. Veneto
4. Campania
5. Sardinia

*Table 2. Mean Regional sample scores on the basis of ITERS scores.*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Emilia Romagna | 3.96 |
| 2. Veneto | 3.85 |
| 3. Umbria | 3.64 |
| 4. Sardinia | 3.03 |
| 5. Campania | 2.06 |

Examination of the standard deviation and the coefficients of variance between the means of the individual day care centres in each Region (Table 3) is useful in explaining the discrepancies between the classifications of the patterns of legislation (Table 1) and actual provision (Table 2), and in understanding the internal situation of each Region and the policies for early infancy which are in play.

*Table 3. Standard deviations and coefficients of variance for each Region on the basis of ITERS scores.*

| Region | Standard deviation | Coefficient of variance |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Veneto | 0.98 | 0.25 |
| 2. Umbria | 0.92 | 0.24 |
| 3. Emilia Romagna | 0.63 | 0.15 |
| 4. Campania | 0.39 | 0.14 |
| 5. Sardinia | 0.20 | 0.06 |

The first thing that may be noted from the standard deviation and coefficient of variance between the means of each day care centre within a Region is the great unevenness among the centres in the Veneto (first in the

classification by standard deviation and coefficiency of variance). Indeed in this Region, alongside situations which from many points of view are extremely privileged (management pattern tried and tested through time, an effective educational coordination, continuing in-service training) and centres with a high level of quality (for example the centre at Verona had a mean of 5.65 in the toddler section, 5.51 in the young toddler section and 5.29 in the infant section), there exist situations with serious problems, which are more tied to an assistential model of the centre (for example the centre at Padua had a mean of 2.52 for the toddler section, 2.56 for the young toddler section and 3.05 for the infant section). In Umbria too there are situations which are qualitatively different in the individual centres. The centre visited at Perugia, where the aims of the centre and the basic model did not seem to be immediately clear (2.68 was the mean score assigned to the toddler and young toddler sections by the ITERS and 2.55 to the infants section), may be compared to the centre at Orvieto, where the careful organization of space and materials, and the care taken in the institutional variables which have most influence on the linguistic and symbolic competence of the child were striking (the young toddler and toddler sections had a mean score of 4.8, while the infant section mean score was 3.78).

The pattern of centres in Emilia Romagna was less varied; here the best section was the infant section visited in Reggio Emilia (mean 5.12), a city which has for many years been experimenting and applying educationally innovative solutions in centres for infancy generally speaking, and the worst was the combined (infant and toddler) section at Castelvetro Piacentino (mean 2.51), a town with less than 10,000 inhabitants which in particular faces organizational problems.

There is less variation in the quality of centres in Campania and Sardinia, Regions which generally do not however have a high standard of quality. 2.6 was the mean value assigned to the combined section in the centre at Teggiano, the best section examined in Campania, in which there is an attempt, limited by the resources offered by the township, to make the best use of furniture and materials. The mean score assigned to the toddler section at Salerno, 1.65, was the lowest score in the sample: this day care centre has more than 100 children registered and is extremely short of furniture and materials. The highest mean score in Sardinia (toddler section of the Sassari centre, 3.8) was not very different from the lowest score (infant section, Lanusei centre, 2.6) and the most pressing problem - which was common to all the centres visited - seems to be the lack of career opportunities open to staff.

The classification of the sections visited according to the mean ITERS score assigned them (Table 4) helps us to understand the uneven picture of the Italian situation, where the South and the Islands pay the penalty for backward and unreflecting policies for infancy.

*Table 4. The 68 sections visited, classified according to ITERS mean score.*

scores by the ITERS:total average - subscales

| sections | avg | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| vvrot | 5.85 | 5.6 | 5.8 | 5 | 4.85 | 6.4 | 5.66 | 6 |
| vvryt | 5.51 | 5.8 | 5.7 | 5 | 4.71 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 6 |
| vvri | 5.2 | 5.2 | 4.2 | 5 | 3.4 | 6 | 6.3 | 6 |
| erei | 5.12 | 6.4 | 3.7 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 5.3 | 5.6 | 5.25 |
| ereyl | 4.97 | 5.6 | 3.4 | 5 | 5.28 | 6 | 5.6 | 5.25 |
| udecs | 4.94 | 5 | 3.87 | 6.5 | 5.57 | 5.3 | 5 | 4.5 |
| eboyt | 4.85 | 5 | 3.6 | 6 | 4.71 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 5.5 |
| ebot | 4.85 | 5 | 3.6 | 6 | 4.71 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 5.5 |
| eboi | 4.84 | 5.2 | 3.8 | 4.5 | 4.5 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 5.5 |
| esori | 4.81 | 5 | 4.4 | 5.5 | 4 | 5 | 4.3 | 4.75 |
| uorvyt | 4.8 | 5.6 | 3.6 | 7 | 4.57 | 6.2 | 5.66 | 3.25 |
| uorvt | 4.8 | 5.6 | 3.6 | 7 | 4.57 | 6.2 | 5.66 | 3.25 |
| eret | 4.77 | 5.2 | 3.3 | 5 | 5.2 | 5.1 | 5.6 | 5.25 |
| ereyt2 | 4.75 | 5.2 | 3.2 | 4.5 | 5.4 | 5.8 | 4.75 | 5.25 |
| esoryt | 4.28 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 5.55 | 3.42 | 4.6 | 3.6 | 4.75 |
| epri | 4.25 | 4.8 | 3.5 | 4.5 | 4.25 | 5.2 | 3 | 4 |
| esort | 4.22 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 5.5 | 3.42 | 4.6 | 3.6 | 4.75 |
| epci | 4.12 | 4 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 4.25 | 5 | 4.3 | 3 |
| ecami | 4.06 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 3.5 | 3 | 4.4 | 4 | 4.25 |
| epryt2 | 4.02 | 4.2 | 3.3 | 5.5 | 4 | 5 | 3.3 | 4 |
| eceni | 3.9 | 4.4 | 4.2 | 5 | 4 | 4.2 | 3 | 3.25 |
| ecamt | 3.85 | 3.6 | 4 | 4.5 | 2.85 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 4.25 |
| emoi | 3.82 | 4 | 3.7 | 3 | 2.75 | 5 | 4.3 | 3.6 |
| ecamyt2 | 3.82 | 3.6 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4.4 | 4 | 4.25 |
| vvet | 3.8 | 4.4 | 3.88 | 6 | 2.85 | 3.8 | 4 | 3.25 |
| emoyt | 3.8 | 3.8 | 4 | 4 | 2.85 | 4.6 | 4 | 3.5 |
| emot2 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 4 | 4 | 2.85 | 4.6 | 4 | 3.5 |
| uorvi | 3.78 | 4.6 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.2 | 5.2 | 3 | 3.25 |
| eprt | 3.77 | 4.4 | 3.1 | 4.5 | 3.4 | 4.6 | 3.3 | 4 |
| emot1 | 3.77 | 3.6 | 4 | 4 | 2.85 | 4.6 | 4 | 3.5 |
| vnoi | 3.72 | 4 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.25 | 4.3 | 3 | 3.75 |
| vveyt | 3.66 | 4.4 | 4.11 | 4.5 | 2.71 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.25 |
| vnoyt | 3.62 | 4.2 | 3.1 | 4.5 | 2.42 | 4.8 | 4.3 | 3.75 |
| vnot | 3.62 | 3.6 | 3.1 | 4 | 3.28 | 4.6 | 4 | 3.75 |
| varscs | 3.62 | 4.6 | 3.2 | 4 | 3.85 | 4 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| ecamyt1 | 3.54 | 3.4 | 3.6 | 3.1 | 2.57 | 4 | 4 | 4.25 |
| ecenyt | 3.5 | 3.4 | 3.7 | 4 | 2.85 | 4 | 3.75 | 3.25 |
| vvei | 3.48 | 4.2 | 4.3 | 3 | 1.6 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.25 |
| esfelt | 3.37 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 2.5 |
| epcyt2 | 3.37 | 3 | 3.3 | 3 | 3 | 4.6 | 3.6 | 3 |
| epcyt1 | 3.37 | 3 | 3.3 | 3 | 3 | 4.6 | 3.6 | 3 |
| epct | 3.37 | 3 | 3.3 | 3 | 3 | 4.6 | 3.6 | 3 |
| ufot | 3.36 | 4 | 3.3 | 4 | 3.71 | 3.8 | 3 | 1.75 |
| ssst | 3.28 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2 | 2.71 | 4.4 | 2.33 | 2.5 |
| esfelyt | 3.22 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 3 | 2.85 | 4 | 3 | 2.5 |
| scat | 3.22 | 3 | 3.3 | 3.5 | 3.14 | 4.2 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| ufoi | 3.18 | 4.4 | 3.3 | 3 | 3 | 3.4 | 2.6 | 1.75 |
| ecent | 3.16 | 2.6 | 3.7 | 3 | 2.57 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.25 |
| epryt1 | 3.11 | 3.2 | 3 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 3.8 | 2.5 | 4 |
| scai | 3.09 | 3 | 3.4 | 3 | 2.75 | 3.6 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| sssi | 3.06 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 2 | 3.25 | 4.2 | 2.3 | 2.5 |
| ssst | 3.05 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 2 | 2.71 | 4.4 | 2.33 | 2.5 |
| vpdi | 3.05 | 3 | 3.7 | 2.5 | 2 | 3.4 | 2.3 | 3.25 |
| slat | 2.91 | 3.2 | 3.2 | 3 | 2.57 | 3.2 | 2.33 | 2.5 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| upgyt | 2.68 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 2.85 | 3 | 2.3 | 2 |
| upgt | 2.68 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 3.5 | 2.85 | 3 | 2.3 | 2 |
| ctet | 2.6 | 3.2 | 2.66 | 3.5 | 3 | 3.4 | 2.33 | 1.75 |
| slai | 2.6 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 2 | 2 | 3.2 | 2.3 | 2.5 |
| vpdyt | 2.56 | 2.6 | 3.22 | 1.5 | 1.85 | 2.5 | 2.25 | 3.25 |
| upgi | 2.55 | 3.2 | 2.4 | 3 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.25 | 2 |
| vpdt | 2.52 | 2.6 | 3.3 | 1.5 | 1.85 | 2.5 | 2 | 2.75 |
| cnat | 2.51 | 3 | 2.88 | 2.5 | 2.14 | 2.2 | 2.33 | 2.25 |
| ecastt | 2.5 | 2.8 | 2.66 | 3 | 1.85 | 3.2 | 2.5 | 1.75 |
| cnai | 3.39 | 2 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 1.8 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.25 |
| csai | 1.94 | 2 | 2.55 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 1 |
| csayt1 | 1.68 | 1.4 | 2.55 | 1 | 1 | 2.2 | 1.66 | 1 |
| csayt2 | 1.68 | 1.4 | 2.55 | 1.5 | 1.43 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1 |
| csat | 1.65 | 1.4 | 2.44 | 1.5 | 1.28 | 1.6 | 1.33 | 1 |

LEGENDA

e=Emilia Romagna
u=Umbria
v=Veneto
c=Campania
s=Sardegna

t=toddlers
yt=young toddlers
i=infants
cs=combined sections

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| vr=Verona | Veneto | > 10000 |
| re=Reggio Emilia | Emilia Romagna | > 10000 |
| de=Deruta | Umbria | |
| bo=Bologna | Emilia Romagna | > 10000 |
| sor=Sorbolo | Emilia Romagna | |
| orv=Orvieto | Umbria | > 10000 |
| pr=Parma | Emilia romagna | > 10000 |
| pc=Piacenza | Emilia Romagna | > 10000 |
| cam=Campagnola | Emilia Romagna | |
| ce=Cento | Emilia Romagna | > 10000 |
| mo= Modena | Emilia Romagna | > 10000 |
| ve= Venezia | Veneto | > 10000 |
| no= Nogara | Veneto | |
| ars=Arsiero | Veneto | |
| sfel=S. Felice | Emilia Romagna | |
| fo= Foligno | Umbria | > 10000 |
| ca=Cagliari | Sardegna | > 10000 |
| Padova | Sardegna | > 10000 |
| pd=Padova | Veneto | > 10000 |
| la=Lanusei | Sardegna | > 10000 |
| pg=Perugia | Umbria | > 10000 |
| te=Teggiano | Campania | |
| na=Napoli | Campania | > 10000 |
| cast=Castelvetro | Emilia Romagna | > 10000 |
| sa= Salerno | Campania | > 10000 |

If the classification presented in Table 4 emphasizes some tendencies of the centres, our investigation also sought to observe the circumstances which determine the overall quality of the microsituation more closely, by using the questionnaires distributed to the care givers in the centres visited.

Comparing the mean ITERS scores for the five Regions with the mean values of the scores assigned on the basis of the questionnaire on the management characteristics of the centre, a strong coincidence may be found between the mean scores for the overall quality of the centre and the parameters which determine its management and organizational features (Spearman r=0.9).

*Table 5. Comparison between the sample regional means for the ITERS and for the questionnaire.*

| Region | mean ITERS score | questionnaire data mean score |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Emilia Romagna | 3.96 | 13.3 |
| 2. Veneto | 3.85 | 13.4 |
| 3. Umbria | 3.64 | 12.25 |
| 4. Sardinia | 3.03 | 7.3 |
| 5. Campania | 2.06 | 2.6 |

In other words there is a strong correlation in the sample of day care centres examined (Spearman r=0.9) between the quality of an extradomestic setting where the little children pass the greater part of the day and a set of management and organizational variables. These variables contribute to spreading a positive image of the centre in the catchment area, stimulating the participation of the parents and improving the professionality of the care givers, who day by day have to cope with children aged between 3 months and 3 years.

If in particular the 5 parameters of the questionnaire that deal with the work conditions of the staff are observed (coordination, career structure and level, staff meetings, management committee, in-service training), and a classification is made of the individual sections of the centres visited, and they are then grouped by Region and compared with the classification for the ITERS scores, a perfect coincidence (Spearman r=1) may be seen between the two classifications for the five Regions.

*Table 6. Comparison between sample Regional means in the ITERS and in items 4-8 of the questionnaire.*

| Region | ITERS means | Items 4-8 means |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Emilia Romagna | 3.96 | 8.5 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Veneto | 3.85 | 7.8 |
| 3. Umbria | 3.64 | 6.5 |
| 4. Sardinia | 3.03 | 2 |
| 5. Campania | 2.06 | 1 |

This means that the Regions which have particularly efficient coordination and have for years organized various types of training courses are better able to meet the needs of the children and the adults that work with them, since in the sample investigated the quality of the centre to a great extent depended on the the work conditions and professional advancement of the care givers.

## 4. Assessment and correlation of the variables that make the centre a place to grow

The importance of the training and the work conditions of the care givers bring into play the educational potential and not just the capacity for assistance and care. For this reason it was decided - on the basis of the ITERS findings - to carefully analyze a series of variables that particularly relate to education and to look for correlations. If the group of 20 sections of infants is separated from the 48 sections of toddlers and young toddlers and a Fisher-Snedecor analysis of variation is applied to the two groups, a significant difference is only obtained for the subscale that relates to learning activity ($F=26.85$ p 0.0000). It should indeed be mentioned that some of the items in this subscale are not applicable to children aged less than 12 months. We therefore thought it would be useful to examine more closely the group of young toddler and toddler sections - to which in any case scores were assigned for the educational items - and to observe the variables which underlie the educational operations in their relations with the social and interactive variables.

We therefore compared (using the Pearson correlation coefficient, at a 0.001 significance level) the items in subscale 3, which concern activities for the promotion of linguistic ability, and 4, concerning learning activities, with all the other items in the scale, and then considered in particular subscale 5, which deals with interaction. The correlations of the items grouped together in these 3 different subscales are in fact worth analyzing because they are particularly indicative of educational experiences and the promotion of social experiences, and do not only deal with informal education and assistance. These features are connected to new patterns of care for very small children which can give indications on the shape of a new educational philosophy for early infancy.

In the 48 sections considered the items concerning learning activity and the acquisition of active and passive linguistic competence, and the items concerning interaction seem to be strongly correlated in two ways: firstly there

is a strong coherence within the three individual subscales, and secondly there is a significant relation between the quality of interactions and the opportunities for learning offered to the child within the same institution. In other words in the centres examined the promotion of motorial, communicational, and symbolic competence seems to be largely dependent on exchanges between peers and between care givers and children - even if it is also certainly linked to the availability of well organized spaces and suitable materials. For this reason it is our opinion that the training of care givers, their professional formation and on-going in-service training seem to be the best guarantee for a centre which must now definitively abandon a custodial and assistential philosophy.